

HALLOWEEN SAFETY TIPS

The Navajo County Public Health Services offers the following safety tips for parents, children, and homeowners to make Halloween a safe event for all:

How to pick your costume

- Make sure your costume is not flammable. Look for "Flame Resistant" on the label.
- Make sure the costume fits well. Children may look cute in floppy or oversized clothing but the costume might cause them to trip and fall.
- Wear comfortable shoes. Avoid high-heels since they can be a trip hazard.
- A natural mask of cosmetics is better than a loose-fitting mask that might restrict breathing or block vision.
- Swords, knives, and similar costume accessories should be of soft and flexible materials.
- Avoid costumes with big, baggy sleeves or billowing skirts.
- Carry a flashlight or glow stick to help see where you are going.
- Avoid wearing masks when walking between houses. Put it on before knocking on the door.

Tips for Trick-or-Treaters

- Set a time limit for your children to 'trick-or-treat.' Designate a specific route for them to take. An adult or responsible teen-ager should accompany any younger children.
- Never trick-or-treat alone. Have at least two buddies go together for the entire evening.
- Carry some quarters in case you need to use a pay phone and call home. Parents can point out the location of pay phones to children before Halloween night. For the very young, sew or pin their name, address, and phone number on their costume and instruct the child on what to do if they become separated or lost.
- Cross only at street corners, never between parked cars, and never diagonally across an intersection. Look in all directions before crossing & obey traffic signals.
- Do not take rides from strangers. Do not take short cuts through backyards, alleys, or parks. Do not walk on the lawn but use the sidewalk or walkway.
- Do not go into a stranger's home. Remain on the porch at all times. Ask for treats at the front door, not the back.
- Do not eat any treats until parents or responsible adult have had time to inspect them.

Tips for Homeowners

- Welcome trick-or-treaters with your porch lights and any other exterior lights on.

Tips for Homeowners (continued)

- Help protect the little ghosts and goblins by monitoring your street for speeding motorists, acts of mischief, and crimes against children.
- Report any suspicious or criminal activity to your local police.
- Do not give homemade or unwrapped treats to children.
- Avoid giving choking hazards such as gum, peanuts, hard candies, or small toys as treats to very young children.
- Make sure your yard is clear of ladders, hoses, dog leashes, clothes lines, and flower pots. All watchdogs should be secured.
- Use battery –powered lights or glow sticks for jack-o-lanterns.
- If you use candles, place well away from pathways.
- Make sure yard decorations won't blow into flaming candles.

Halloween and Pets

- Leaving pets outside on Halloween is not a good idea. There are malicious people who tease, injure, steal, torture, and even kill pets on Halloween. Keep cats or dogs inside or otherwise secured for the night.
- As much as your dog or cat may beg for Halloween candy, remember that chocolate can be harmful to pets.

Tips on Treats

- Have the child eat a good dinner before setting out to trick-or-treat. This will make it easier to avoid eating too much candy.
- Instruct your child to bring all candy home to be checked before eating. Tampering is rare but unfortunately it still happens.
- Health food alternatives include packages of low-fat crackers with cheese filling, single-serve boxes of raisins, and single-serve packets of low-fat popcorn that can be microwaved later.
- Non-food treats include plastic toys, coins, and baseball cards.
- Unless you know and trust the source of the food, discard any item that is homemade or unwrapped.
- Check the wrappers of commercial treats for evidence of tampering.
- Wash all fruit before eating. Cut fruit into sections before eating.
- Call the police if there is evidence of tampering of any food item.

Carving the pumpkin

- Use a stable, flat surface with good lighting to carve the pumpkin.
- Allow the children to draw a face on the pumpkin then parents should do the cutting.
- There are kits available with tiny saws that work better than knives and are safer (although you can be cut by them as well).

Be a careful driver

The Centers for Disease Control showed that during 1974-1996, the number of deaths among young pedestrians was four times higher on Halloween evening when compared with the same time period during all other evenings of the year. For example, most of the time children spend outdoors is typically during daylight hours. However, Halloween activities often occur after dark. Also, children engaged in 'trick-or-treat' frequently cross streets at mid-block rather than at corners or crosswalks, putting them at risk for injury. Do not overestimate children's street-crossing skills. Be a careful driver on Halloween night.

*If your school or organization would like the above information on a free tri-fold flyer to print and handout, contact Gary Barnes at the Navajo County Public Health office at (928) 524-4750.